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## Middle East-Africa-South Asia

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**148**  
SC No. 10378/75  
December 15, 1975

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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

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CONTENTS

Jordan: Army Discontent . . . . . 1

[REDACTED]

Nepal: New Broom. . . . . 4

USSR-Afghanistan: Podgorny Visit. . . . . 6

25X1D

Dec 15, 1975

SECRET SPOKE

Jordan*Army Discontent*

Serious grumbling is again being heard in the Jordanian army. Low pay seems to lie at the heart of the discontent, although many of the other conditions that led to the Zarqa mutiny in February 1974 still exist.

A growing disparity between civilian and military wages has caused a higher rate of desertions and resignations recently among both enlisted men and officers, especially those with special technical skills. Military pay, unlike civilian wages, has not kept pace with inflation. Technicians and even unskilled laborers can earn up to four times as much outside the army.

Many enlisted men have made ends meet by taking second jobs, but they may not be able to continue this practice. It is considered illegal, and the authorities are beginning to crack down.

Morale is reportedly low, too, in the officer corps because of the delay in making changes in the chain of command.



25X6

Low pay and inflation were important underlying causes of the Zarqa mutiny. At that time, Chief of Staff Bin Shakir and Prime Minister Rifai became the targets of army discontent because of their ostentatious style of living. Neither man is any more popular today and could well become the focus once again of army dissatisfaction.

(Continued)

Dec 15, 1975

1

SECRET SPOKE

**Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt**

SECRET SPOKE

## Nepal

### *New Broom*

The new government under Tulsī Giri, appointed prime minister on December 1, has already made several decisive moves. Shortly after his re-assumption of the office he last held more than a decade ago, Giri ordered the release of four political prisoners and a lifting of some of the restrictions on the domestic press.

On December 10, the government announced a 10-point program of administrative and economic reforms. These included steps designed to increase efficiency of the traditionally lethargic bureaucracy, to reduce corruption within government and to enforce more rigorous collection of taxes. In the economic field, the government decreed reductions in the price of various goods handled by government enterprises and sought, by veiled threat of nationalization, to hold down prices in the private sector. At his first press conference, Giri had identified the most pressing problems facing Nepal as "red tapism," corruption and rising prices.

King Birendra, who chose Giri to be his ranking minister, announced changes in the basic political system on December 11. In the future, the sessions of the National Panchayat--Nepal's indirectly elected parliament that recommends legislation to the king--will be open to the public. The size of the National Panchayat will be increased from 125 to 134, but 20 percent of the members of the new body will be nominated by the king whereas only 15 percent of the old memberships were his nominees. Finally, there will be what amounts to a slight broadening of the franchise.

Giri is described as a dynamic, pragmatic and articulate spokesman for the monarchy and the "panchayat system"--a several-tiered structure of assemblies and councils that rises from the village to national levels.

(Continued)

Dec 15, 1975

4

SECRET SPOKE

25X6

25X6

[REDACTED] his reform program has been greeted with considerable skepticism in Kathmandu. Nevertheless, King Birendra, who makes all essential political decisions in Nepal, obviously wanted the capable Giri at his side at a time when Nepal faces internal elections--scheduled for early 1976--and early important trade negotiations with India. (CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN/ORCON)

25X1A

Dec 15, 1975

5

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USSR-Afghanistan

*Podgorny Visit*

Soviet Chief of State Podgorny's hastily scheduled visit to Afghanistan on December 9-10 brought few concrete results. Although Podgorny's entourage included senior economic and military aid officials, there is no indication that any new agreements were reached. The two sides did agree to extend for an additional ten years their July 1931 treaty on neutrality and mutual nonaggression.

The consultations were no doubt useful in Soviet eyes, however, in reminding Kabul of the high priority Moscow attaches to maintaining good relations with its South Asian neighbors. The Afghans, for their part, probably were pleased to have an opportunity to reassure their largest economic and military aid benefactor that President Daoud's recent purges of generally Soviet-oriented leftist officials were not intended to signal a fundamental change in relations.

The Soviets were not able to obtain a stronger Afghan endorsement of Moscow's pet Asian collective security concept in the joint communique issued at the conclusion of the visit. The statement, in fact, omits even the general reference to a "security system" that appeared in the communique issued after Daoud visited Moscow last year. Daoud may have held out on this--despite reported pressure from Podgorny--because he did not want to imply recognition of Afghanistan's existing border with Pakistan. The Afghans are also loathe to endorse a proposal that has no Asian adherent other than Mongolia. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A

Dec 15, 1975

6

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